

I oppose loosening the rules designed to promote and protect diversity of media ownership. These rules were adopted to ensure that the public would receive a diverse range of viewpoints from the media, and not simply the opinions of a handful of media conglomerates.

I urge the FCC to maintain and promote diversity within the American media; do not allow a small group of conglomerates to dominate. As a resident of Madison, Wisconsin I have seen what were once locally-owned radio stations become part of larger corporations. As this occurs, the stations lose their local contacts and local news broadcasting along with national and international news reporting suffers. Listeners can't understand the issues, because they aren't covered or are only partially covered. My husband and I lived in Nigeria for over six years and are dedicated radio listeners. Radio broadcasts in particular are an important source of news, music, and public affairs because we can listen at home, in our cars as we drive, and sometimes in our workplace. The only two stations that come close to serving the city are WERN 88.9 FM and WORT89.9 FM. WORT, in particular truly makes every effort to open the airwaves to the public and present listeners with wonderful news coverage and interesting music. I've been so impressed with the station that I've started volunteering at the station in my spare time.

The "proliferation of outlets" for television hasn't meant an improvement in the quality of what is broadcast, but instead has substituted sound bites that again do not give the public enough information on issues to help them understand what the real issues are. All is superficial.

Larger media companies do not strengthen diverse reporting and analysis. The financial bottom line of the company becomes the most important item on the company books. In particular news suffers because programs are syndicated. Local issues are again covered in sound bites rather than in depth. International news coverage in particular disappears from the airwaves. The big issues of today are gone tomorrow (I haven't heard anything about Osama bin Ladin for months) because there is very little, if any followup. News bits are presented in a vacuum with nothing around to help us evaluate what we hear or see.

As for cable television, the Madison viewing market has a virtual monopoly; the only alternative is satellite TV which doesn't offer local programs. Also, cable and satellite television is expensive. People with limited income are left out of the equation when it comes to being

"represented." Which leads me to the internet. Again, the internet only offers information to those who can afford to purchase a computer and learn how to use it. The information revolution is not open to more than half of the American population. Half of the public is left out and ignored.

It is essential to American democracy to maintain diversity of the press, the airwaves, television, and the internet. To promote consolidation among or between these forms of media is to perform a major disservice to the American public; it denies us access to continued education about our local communities, the nation, and the world in general.

I urge the FCC to maintain media diversity; consolidation only leads to mediocrity - and more commercials.

Yours truly,
Kathleen Beckett